

FROM THE BABYLON OF THE WEST

continually grow in grace, strong to uplift the banner of the most holy Cross."¹

From the outset, the Florentines had pushed on the war—as, indeed, they were compelled to do in the face of the coming of the Bretons. Rodolfo Varano, Lord of Camerino, a feudatory of the Church, had been appointed captain-general of the League, and despatched to Bologna. Bartolommeo di Smeduccio had likewise been taken into the service of the Republic, and had had the campaign in the Marches committed to him. Bartolommeo was a personal enemy of Rodolfo's, and the two would not work in harmony; but he bore a more deadly hatred towards Gomez Albornoz, who had attempted to deprive him of San Severino by treachery, and he could be trusted to use all his power for the reduction of the citadel of Ascoli. The Bretons had arrived at Borgo di Panicale in the Bolognese contado on July 12, had taken and sacked Crespolano, and were ravaging all the country round with fire and sword—the Cardinal of Geneva urging them on and applauding their worst excesses. Rodolfo, though at the head of a powerful force, contented himself with holding Bologna, and made no serious efforts to take the field against them. Elsewhere, the Florentines were feeling the heavy weight of the papal censures. The expulsion of their merchants and the imprisonment of their other citizens at Avignon had cut them off from their profitable commerce with Provence and the papal court. Although France, Spain, and England did not carry out the papal decrees to the letter, enough was done in the first two countries to inflict immense damage upon the commerce of the Republic, and expelled Florentine merchants returned to the city from all parts of the world.² The Pisans refused to take any active steps in the matter ; but, after some delay, the Queen of

¹ *Orationi* I. and II.

² The Bishop of London, William Courtenay, published the bull against the Florentines, but was compelled by the King and Chancellor to retract the publication. Cf. *Dtct. of National Biography*, XII. p. 343. In the following June, 1377, we find the Signoria thanking the King and the Duke of Lancaster for favours granted to Florentines in England. Gherardi, *op. cit.*, doc. 357.